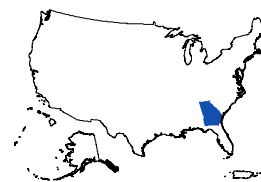


2000 Environmental Quality Incentives Program



Customer Focus—

Richard and Charles Stewart own and operate Stewart Brothers Dairy in Greene County. The 223-acre farm has about 375 head of dry and milking cows with 47.5 acres set aside for hay production. Their farm has received many awards for continuous high grades in milk production and was declared one of the cleanest dairies in the Southeast. "In the farm business you must utilize every possible resource and at the same time not deplete nor degrade it to the point you no longer benefit from it," states Richard. With fertilizer prices increasing, the Stewarts looked at alternative ways to apply nutrients to their hayfields. One option was to forgo fertilizing, which could lower yield on the hay crop and require purchase of more bulk feed during winter.

Their current waste management system has a lagoon in place with an ample supply of nutrients. "In a sense, it is like having a fertilizer bin on the farm that makes its own fertilizer," remarks Charles. The only setback was getting the effluent to the hay fields. The Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District and the Oconee RC&D provide a lagoon pumpout service for a fee to cover fuel and operator cost. The Stewarts consulted with NRCS and applied for EQIP cost-share assistance to cover some of the overhead cost. They received approval and worked with NRCS and the University of Georgia Extension Service to develop a nutrient management plan based on their lagoon and soil samples. The district arranged for pumping to the hay fields. The Stewarts had an ample supply of hay for winter, and additional storage was available in the lagoon for the continuous inflow of effluents from the milk barn. This reduces the chance of overflowing into drainageways during major storm events. "EQIP really came through for us when we needed it the most," stated Richard.

Georgia Summary

Overview

In Georgia, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has been an all around success, providing individuals with quality conservation measures. Some areas in which EQIP provides incentive and/or structural measures are livestock, poultry, forestry, erosion control, water quality, and wildlife habitat. Over 2,100 applications were received throughout Georgia requesting EQIP funding. About 20 percent of the EQIP applications were funded. The State's funding is in two divisions: priority areas and statewide concerns. Of Georgia's EQIP funds, 70 percent funded priority areas and 30 percent statewide concerns.

Accomplishments

Georgia received \$2,818,038 to fund EQIP in FY 2000. Landowners in 18 priority areas (see map) as well as Georgia statewide were assisted. Over 90 counties (57% of the counties in Georgia) received EQIP funding. Funding totaled \$1,972,626 for priority areas and \$845,412 for statewide concerns. A total of 417 EQIP contracts were funded.

Outlook

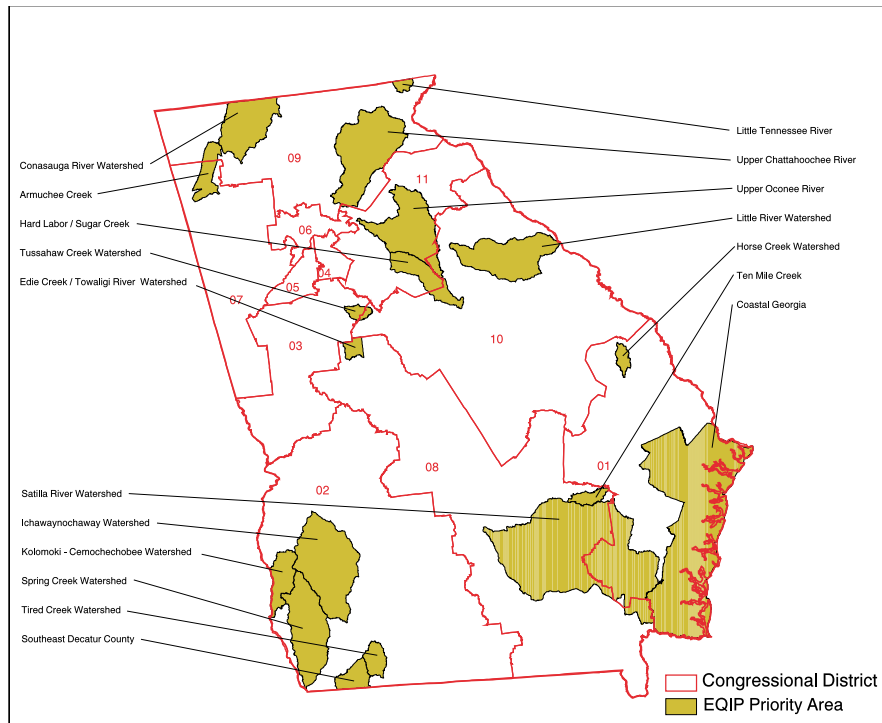
A credit for improvements in our environment belongs to implementation of EQIP. This program brought about a level playing field in Federal fund distribution. Many people could apply for benefits that helped solve conservation problems on their land and protect our environment at the same time. The old cost-share program appeared to be geared more toward solving problems of farming operations. Today, EQIP is reaching diverse stewards of the land and is shedding the paradigm of just being a farming program. The farming community is still EQIP's biggest benefactor; however, users range from farming to wildlife management to tree establishment, and much more. EQIP was established not as a crutch for landowners, but a tool to get them headed in the right direction. Most people want to do the right things for the environment; however, this sometime is not enough. Therefore, encouragement through incentive payments seems to work. Lack of funding is a major issue. This year, Georgia had nearly 1,700 applications that could not be funded. This has been a consistent pattern over the last 4 years. The opportunity for a healthy environment is in reach, and EQIP is a tool that can and should be used to get us there.

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Georgia EQIP Priority Areas Within Congressional Districts



Georgia EQIP Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District

Congressional Districts	Fiscal Year 2000		Cumulative Total (97-00)	
	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts	Obligated Dollars	Number of Contracts
District 0	\$1,002,088	209	\$4,436,548	1,021
District 1	133,003	10	885,481	126
District 2	512,317	50	2,055,920	278
District 3	11,131	1	67,956	8
District 7	172,448	23	778,198	154
District 8	309,475	67	1,759,356	289
District 9	507,689	58	1,985,928	276
District 10	84,559	25	281,051	106
District 11	73,385	18	859,178	134
State Totals	\$2,806,095	461	\$13,109,616	2,392

Note: EQIP contracts for each Congressional District are estimated from Conservation Priority Areas, which may include more than one district. Congressional District 0 = EQIP Contracts for Statewide Natural Resource Concerns, which can be in any Congressional District in the state.

Source: FSA Recordset type01, data through 4th quarter FY2000

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